LOADSTAR LETTER #15

October 1994 Companion newsletter for LOADSTAR #124
"Real News! Fifteen Newsletters and *still* No O.J. Simpson!"
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Creative Cooling. How To Make Your Electronic Gear Work -- Even When It's Broken!

by Jeff Jones. People often ask me, "What's that thing on top of your VCR?"

I reply, "It's my Norelco Clean Air Machine. It keeps my VCR working."

My VCR overheats. When it does, it will simply STOP. Stop playing, stop recording -- just STOP, as if someone had pressed STOP on the remote. I know it is overheating because when I place my Clean air machine over the VCR's vent to cool it, the VCR can play all day and all night without any unwanted stops. The clean air machine is just a fan with a filter on its bottom. I bought it 8 years ago for my 1541 disk drive. It used to overheat, too, and stay in a state of constant 74,drive not ready,00,00. I kept the clean air machine right over the vents of the 1541. For as long as the fan was on, the 1541 operated properly. Now the 1541 is truly dead. I tossed it thirty feet into a dumpster when it spun for the last time. Ah, but the 1541 spun for an extra five years because it was kept cool by a steady flow of air.

How can you tell when a device is overheating? If your unit operates fine at first, but over time, whether it's a few minutes or hours later, becomes problematic, overheating is the likely culprit. Heat takes time to accumulate. If the device is simply broken, it simply won't work. But if it works fine at first, then gradually or dramatically goes off the deep end, it's likely overheating.

You may not need a fan. You may only need to move the unit off of a carpet or move other units away from it. If you stack devices, take care never to stack a unit with vents on top (like 1541s). This extends to your stereo system. The receiver or amplifier is going to generate the most heat. It should definitely NOT be stacked on the bottom. In your computer system, only your drives and power supplies are going to overheat. I've never heard of a C-64 or 128 overheating, but then again they do have heat sinks and boucoup vents. So don't cover them.

Electronics, like any other device, have environmental specs by which they will operate. Even your car is not invulnerable to extremes (though once it's warm it may be seem invulnerable to cold). If you look closely at your more detailed specification sheets, you'll see where it tells you the extremes of heat and cold in which your various devices will function properly. It's almost a sure thing that an FD-2000 won't operate properly (if at all) in a sizzling un-air conditioned hut in Death Valley or a frigid unheated igloo in Alaska.

This is because semiconductors behave certain ways at certain temperatures. As a matter of fact, many semi conductors such as diodes and transistors are designed to have schizophrenic tendencies depending on current. Other semiconductors, like resistors, were meant to be more rigid. Still a 200 ohm resistor may behave like a 1000 ohm resistor in freezing conditions. A hot transistor can spew electrons way off spec.

Remember the old days when televisions had to "warm up" when you turned them on? By the time your TV was ready, you had missed the beginning of the show. That's because TV then had a more narrow range of operation. Cold, it simply wasn't warm enough for the juice to flow to all the parts in the right amounts. But if they warm up too much, they'll shut down, even become damaged. If you own equipment with obvious vents, make an effort to keep them uncovered. The vents allow warm air to rise up and away from the unit. More importantly, if you look closely at the bottom of the unit, you may find more vents that allow room temperature air (hopefully cooler) to be sucked in, filling the place of rising hot air. Cover either vent and this process, called convection, is hindered.

Back when I was married in 1985, I kept a dead C-64 power supply going for months by sealing it and keeping it submerged in ice water (DON'T TRY THIS!!). Norelco Clean Air Machines cost $7 when I got mine. Since then the device has been re-designed and is more expensive. Most any small fan will do. Radio Shack sells cooling fans that can fit on or in your devices. A close inspection of most any Kmart of Wal-Mart shelf will find a fan that is just the right shape and size for your cooling needs.

Once a part starts down the path of overheating, the part will eventually die despite creative cooling. It's overheating because

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it's defective or worn. Cooling can long delay that final puff of smoke until you can afford to have it repaired.

Pardon Our Dust. We're Building A New Presenter To Serve You Better

LOADSTAR's new presenter (what we call the main menu system) is constantly changing. Hopefully the bugs are approaching the 0% mark. We know that there are a few inevitable bugs that will slip through for the first couple of months, but please be patient with us. The content of LOADSTAR hasn't changed.

Actually that's not true because the new presenter deals with packed text, and we can give you more than 30% product in the same space. The LOADSTAR you have now would have had to arrive on three disks before we had the packing technology so graciously donated to us by Gene Barker of MAD MAN SOFTWARE.

There were two major reasons that we embarked on the new presenter: To provide true compatibility with multi-drive, 1581 and CMD users without having to swap device numbers, and to get around limitations that the previous presenter imposed upon us. When we brainstormed back in the late 80s, we had no idea that in 1994, users would own RAMLinks, FD-4000s and Hard drives.

The presenter supports CMD devices beginning on issue #125. Just press + or - and the presenter will search up or down through partitions for the next LOADSTAR issue and then LOAD the features of that LOADSTAR. No more CP commands! Not only that, no more stopping on partitions that don't even have a LOADSTAR on them! The new presenter will search up to your highest partition and then cycle back to partition 1. We only ask that the LOADSTAR be in the root partition and not in a subdirectory.

You can change the active device by pressing CTRL-D. You can then press L to LOAD the features of a different LOADSTAR without re-booting. I received a letter from a man who told us that the presenter was hard to read on a black background. I kicked myself for procrastinating on implementing a current feature. The new presenter: It's configurable! Every time the new presenter boots, it searches for a file called LS settings. There is expects to find color codes and music on/off preference. On issue #126, I'll include a BASIC program in SOAPBOX that will create the ls settings file. If you want to jump the gun and try making your own configuration program, here is what the presenter is looking for on disk:

File name: ls settings
Load address: None. Just a data file

BYTE	DEFAULT	FUNCTION
0	0	Background Color
1	0	Border Color
2	3	Text Color
3*	14	Tile
4	7	Boxes
5	10	Info box
6	13	Info Text Color
7*	7	Sec Address
8	1	music
9	1	highlight bar
10	14	menus
11*	0	auto read
12	1	banner top
13	3	banner middle
14	6	banner bottom
15	3	bottom info
16*	0	reading backgnd

The asterisks denote unimplemented settings, but by issue 126 byte 16, control of the background color while reading text files, will be implemented. Our readers seem to prefer lighter backgrounds with darker text. Imagine that! Isn't that how 99.9% of all books are published? No problem. Next month, the screen will automatically brighten for text. I'll add a few default color combinations that you can cycle through using the space bar. Remember, the features mentioned in this paragraph won't be implemented until Issue #126. If you're a BASIC programmer, you can create an LS settings file that customizes LOADSTAR before then.

The Compleat Roger In Production At The Tucker Tower

For almost a decade, Roger Norton, an educator and programmer, has been delivering edu-fun games to test our smarts. By the time this is in print, Fender claims, with sweat dotting his brow, that a collection of 25 teacher-tested educational programs will be compiled in another of our compleat series, available for $20, shipping included.

Newsletter on Thinner Paper?

Yes it is. The zillion-dollar automatic envelope stuffer is quite a cranky machine, and will often stop whenever it senses that one of the items being inserted was NOT inserted properly. When one of those lights go on and the line stops because of our newsletter (which is unique to the LOADSTAR publication) David, Gwen or Mary will grumble curses at the machine -- and at the ever lovin' brown-eyed Jeff. I was told that perhaps a thinner newsletter would help matters. For those who perceive this change as some outward sign of a decline of LOADSTAR, be advised that we saved a whopping $13.00 moving from 60 pound paper to 20 pound. Qlink may be gone, but we're still here as long as you want us. We're profitable, folks.

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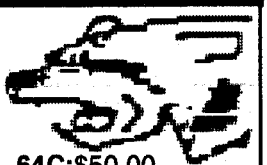

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Qlinkers Speak Out

I went online on October 6, 1994 to find out what people were saying. Sadly Qlink is so dead now that the following posts were all I could find.

SUBJ: AOL MUST DIE!! (R4)
FROM: Centipede 08/02/94 S#: 397791

As i'm sure you've read, Q-Link is gone at the end of October.

They say they can no longer afford to keep the system working. Maybe they could if they spent a little more time and money on Q. Instead they spend all their resources on AOL. They would probably say the money problem is because of declining membership on Q. Maybe if they had fixed things instead of letting half, or more, of the system fall apart, users wouldn't have left.

They give the demise of Commodore as another reason for Q being discontinued. I say there are still plenty of C64/128 users out there who could've kept Q going is things were fixed. I subscribe to Loadstar, a disk magazine for the 64/128. I haven't heard anything from them about going out of business because Commodore did. I think a major reason is because they keep improving their product. On the other hand, Steve Case & the people who run AOL & Q have done nothing to make Q better. They haven't even done anything to keep what already existed working.

My favorite part of the news about Q's demise is the part about going over to AOL. Why don't they just come out & say...Come over to AOL where you'll be screwed just like you've been on Q!!

SUBJ: : (R)
FROM: GH Wells 08/02/94 S#: 397993

My favorite part of Steve Case's "Dear Members" letter was where he acknowledged that many of us may have "noticed a diminished level of product quality in the last few months"! He must have written the letter two years ago and just now figured out how to post it.

SUBJ: there are (R)
FROM: Snickers 08/03/94 S#: 398029

still ALOT of commie users and a system that LOVES us!! :>>>>

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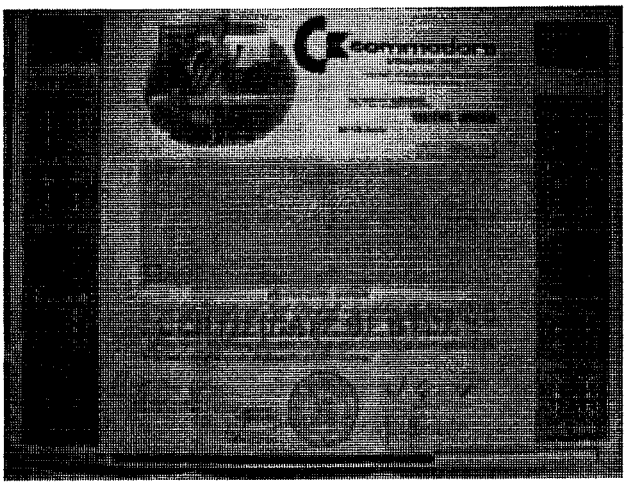
SUBJ: AOL & Q-Link



Commodore Stock! It's hot -- because people are burning it!

FROM: Lord Ronin 08/07/94 S#: 398960

Yo AOL fools. I may be a crazed crippled 'nam vet. But I think that if GEnie can run stuff for 64/128. Then Q-Link can be maintained. I have owned my 64 for a year and a half. Been on Q-Link less than 9 months and you are ripping it away. Fine, now you want me to join AOL. Great, but you won't/don't support Commodore. GEnie does. Are they better than you? I want the files that you have for the 64 and the 128. So don't just erase them, pass them along to someone who will upload them to other boards. GEnie for one and our local Circuit Net node. Hell I am saving up for hard drives from CMD. Send them to me and I'll put them on my upcoming board. If you want me on AOL. Then you have two choices. <A> support commodore or <B> ISSUE ME THE COMPUTER OF YOUR CHOICE THAT LOGS ON YOUR AOL!!!. 'Cause man I don't think the lord god shines out of I.B.M.'s rectum!! DIG man! Keep Q-Link Loadstar is doing fine, CMD is doing fine, the asian and euro markets are doing fine.
Hey how much is I.B.M. paying you to do this to commodore people?

SUBJ: Phoenix Stuff (R2)
FROM: MsOgeny 08/06/94 S#: 398757

Since you're less likely to read a reply under the "AOL must die" header...
The 24-hour toll-free number for Phoenix, (800) 869-1155, is a voice line, not a data line. The Phoenix Network is a multi-forum online system with Internet mail and some 100 or so Internet newsgroups, as well as a large working library of Commodore files. They support all platforms, with about equal usage by Commodore and MS-DOS users.

The system is accessed via Sprintnet, with hundreds of local access numbers in the U.S. The terminal programs of choice are:

C128--Desterm 2.0 (available here)
Desterm 2.01 (not available here)

C64 --Novaterm 9.4 (available here)
Novaterm 9.5 (not available here)
There are, as of this date, no "front end" terminals for Phoenix.

There is no monthly fee. Off-prime usage rate is $4.50/hour. A major credit card is the preferred method of payment.

Several trivia games are played every evening in the interactive chat areas.

Word games are also played several nights a week, at 2am Eastern.

SUBJ: in case (R)
FROM: Snickers 08/09/94 S#: 399458

you're using using your commie to access Phoenix, and aren't familiar with the term sprint net(i wasn't), you can use whatever local telenet number you are now using to access Qlink :> for specific sign on information its best to call the voice number first. They also have some outtasite online games there, the newest being..TradeWars 2002... WOW! also, ever wanted to slap someone silly when your sitting in a public chat room?? well on phoenix there are about 125 actions you can do while in a chat room! :>

Plus many of the forums that you use to love here on Q, before they decided we were all expendable!

SUBJ: A Death in the family...
FROM: CHESTER E 10/05/94 S#: 72628

I might as well kick off the many farewell messages that will appear on this post. I have had a lot of good times and laughs here on Q and have had the privilege of meeting more than a few good and wonderful people here. I will miss you one and all, as well as this platform on which we could get to know each other better. Of course we had our differances of opinion, and the debates sometimes got heated if not downright dirty, but someone always made a clever wisecrack that cooled things down some. I can't think of someone that didn't come away learning something of value here, at the very least a person's typing improved (if not their spelling ;D). Losing Q is a blow much like a death in the family, we have lost a friend that we loved to talk to. We will find something else to replace it but it won't be Q, what a shame. I hope to see you somewhere, my friends, I'm on Compuserve, GEnie, & Phoenix, and maybe Delphi soon. If you need to talk to an old Q crony My address on Compuserve is 72672,3312, my "Handle" on GEnie is C.EMERSON, & on Phoenix CHESTER E. Hope to see you elsewhere, sometime soon. In the meantime I'll be here til Nov. 1st. Thank you all for the fun & laughs, if I don't see you in cyberspace again you'll be missed. Farewell Q, Good bye all.

Mail From: Gustav V Date:
Wednesday 5-Oct-94 22:57 EDT

Open up a LOADSTAR BBS! Now that the Q is Defunct, there is a howling need for a good commie BBS. Many of us "LOADies" would be thrilled to be in intimate contact with some of our heroes from Shreveport! All the Best. (And you ARE the Best!)

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1581/1541-II Power Supply	$25.00

Utilities

CMD Utilities	$24.95
JiffyMON-64 (ML Monitor)	$19.95
Big Blue Reader V4.10 (SOGWAP)	$39.00
The Compression Kit (Mad Man)	$39.00

GEOS

CMD's C-1351 Compatible SmartMouse	$49.95
GEOS 64 v2.0	$44.00
GEOS 128 v2.0	$49.00
geoCalc 64 or geoFile 64	$40.00
geoCalc 128 or geoFile 128	$45.00
geoProgrammer	$45.00
geoPublish	$40.00
geoChart	$29.00
Desk Pack Plus	$29.00
FONTPACK	$25.00
International FONTPACK	$25.00
geoBASIC	$20.00
BeckerBASIC	$20.00
RUN GEOS Companion	$20.00
RUN GEOS Power Pak I or II (Specify)	$20.00
gateWay/64 or 128 (Specify Version)	$29.95
Collette Utilities (Handy Geos Utilities)	$19.95
Perfect Print LQ for GEOS (Laser-like output)	$49.95
geoMakeBoot (Makes Bootable copies)	$12.95
geoShell V2.2 (CLI for GEOS)	$24.95
Dweezils Greatest Hits (NewTools2,Stamp,Label128)	$30.00

Books

Superbase - The Book	$15.00
Anatomy of the 1541	$12.00
C128 Computer Aided Design	$12.00
Commodore 64 Tricks and Tips	$12.00
Graphics Book for the C-64	$12.00
Printer Book for the C64	$12.00
Ideas for Use on Your C-64	$12.00

Languages/Compilers

BASIC 64 Compiler (Abacus)	$17.00
BASIC 128 Compiler (Abacus)	$25.00
Blitz! 64 Compiler (Skyles)	$30.00
Blitz! 128 Compiler (Skyles)	$30.00
Cobol 64 (Abacus)	$17.00
Fortran 64 (Abacus)	$17.00
Pascal 64 (Abacus)	$17.00

RAMLink Power-Backed RAM Disk

RAMLink with 0 MB RAMCard	$189.95
RAMLink with 1 MB RAMCard	$229.95
RAMLink with 4 MB RAMCard	$349.95
Real-Time-Clock for RAMCard (Optional)	$20.00
RAMLink Battery Back-up (Optional)	$24.95
Parallel Cable (RAMLink to HD)	$14.95

Games

AcroJet	$12.00
Airborne Ranger	$16.00
Atomino	$17.00
Ballistix	$13.00
Blackjack Academy	$12.00
Blood Money	$15.00
Chomp!	$10.00
Conflict in Vietnam	$16.00
F-15 Strike Eagle	$16.00
F-19 Stealth Fighter	$20.00
Keith Van Eron's Pro Soccer	$15.00
Laser Squad	$13.00
Last Ninja II	$15.00
Mainframe	$13.00
Marble Madness	$13.00
Menace	$15.00
Navy Seal	$10.00
Red Storm Rising	$16.00
Rings of Medusa	$16.00
RUN C128 Funpak	$15.00
RUN C64 Gamepak	$15.00
Silent Service	$16.00
Skate or Die	$13.00
The Amazing Spider-Man	$15.00
The President Is Missing!	$10.00
The Three Stooges	$10.00
Tie Break Tennis	$16.00
Total Eclipse	$10.00
Ultima III or V (Please Specify)	$17.00
Wizardry V	$24.00

Productivity

Tax Perfect 64	$69.00
Tax Perfect 128	$79.00
Pocket Writer 2 (64) (Digital Sol.)	$65.00
Pocket Writer 3 (64 or 128) (Digital Sol.)	$70.00
Pocket Planner 2 or Pocket Filer 2	$35.00
SuperScript 64 (Precision)	$15.00
SuperScript 128 (Precision)	$20.00
Data Manager 2 (Timeworks)	$16.00
Suberbase 64 Version 3.01 (Precision)	$35.00
Superbase 128 Version 3.01 (Precision)	$35.00
PowerPlan 64 (Abacus)	$16.00
SwiftCalc 64 (Timeworks)	$16.00
Cadpak 64 (Abacus)	$22.00
Cadpak 128 (Abacus)	$25.00
Chartpak 64 (Abacus)	$17.00
Chartpak 128 (Abacus)	$25.00
I Paint v1.5 (128, 80-col., 64K VDC) (Living Proof)	$39.00
I Port v1.54 (128, 80-col., 64K VDC) (Living Proof)	$29.00
RUN Productivity Pak I, II, or III (Specify)	$15.00
RUN Super Starter Pak 1541 or 1581	$20.00
RUN Works	$20.00

Telecommunications

Dialogue 128	$29.00
SpeedTerm (Abacus)	$25.00
SwiftLink RS-232 Cartridge (Up to 38.4K baud)	$39.95
SwiftLink Modem Cable (DB9-DB25)	$9.95
Commodore 1660 Modem (300 baud)	$10.00
BOCA 2400 Baud Modem	$69.00
BOCA 2400 w/SwiftLink and Cable	$99.00
BOCA 14.4K Baud Modem	$189.00
BOCA 14.4K w/SwiftLink & Cable	$219.00

Music/MIDI Software

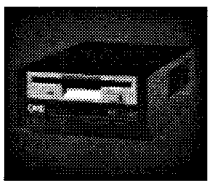
Dr. T KCS64 & MIDI Interface	$150.00
Dr. T KCS128 & MIDI Interface	$189.00
Dr. T Algorithmic Composer	$20.00
Dr. T 4-OP MIDI Ed/Lib	$20.00
Dr. T CZ-Rider MIDI Ed/Lib	$20.00
Dr. T DX-7 MIDI Ed/Lib	$20.00

JiffyDOS

Increase Speed Up to 1500% while retaining 100% compatibility

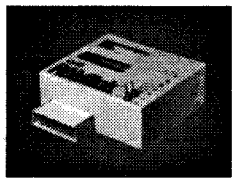
- Speeds up Loading, Saving, Verifying, Formatting and Reading/Writing of Program, Sequential, User and Relative files unlike cartridges which only speed up Loading and Saving of PRG files
- Built-in DOS Wedge plus 17 additional features including file copier, text dump, printer toggle, and redefinable function keys make using your computer easier and more convenient
- ROM upgrade installs easily into most computers and disk drives. Supports C-64, 64C, SX-64, C-128, 128-D, 1541, 1541C, 1541-II,1571, 1581 and more.

FD Series



3.2 and 1.6 MB 3.5" Floppy Drives

The FD-2000 and FD-4000 disk drives utilize today's latest 3.5 inch disk drive technology. FD-2000's support 800K (1581 style) and 1.6 MB (High Density) formats, while the FD-4000 also offers support for the 3.2 MB (Enhanced Density) disk format. Fast and reliable, they support 1541, 1571 and 1581 style partitions, Native Mode partitioning and can actually read and write 1581 disks. FD's feature built-in JiffyDOS, SWAP button and optional Real Time Clock. High capacity, speed and compatibility make the FD right for every application, including GEOS.

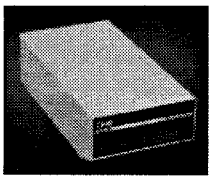


RAMLink

Power-Backed Expandable REU

The fastest possible form of storage, RAMLink provides instant access to files and retains data while your computer is turned off. Easy to use and expandable up to 16 MB, RAMLink utilizes the same powerful operating system found in CMD Hard Drives. Unlike Commodore REU's which are compatible with less than 1% of commercial software, RAMLink supports more than 80% of the commercial titles. RAMLink also offers built-in JiffyDOS Kernal, SWAP feature, reset button, enable/disable switch, pass-thru port and RAM port for REU/GEORAM use. RAMLink offers maximum speed, expandability and compatibility with all types of software and hardware including GEOS.

HD Series



SCSI Hard Drive for the C-64/128

HD Series Hard Drives are available in capacities up to 1 GB, are fully partitionable, and can emulate 1541, 1571, & 1581 disks while Native partitions utilize MSDOS-style subdirectories. HD's connect easily to the serial bus or parallel via RAMLink. Includes built-in JiffyDOS, SWAP feature and RTC. HD's offer superior compatibility with most commercial software including BBS, Productivity and GEOS. And with new pricing, HD Series drives offer the lowest cost per megabyte of any C64/128 storage device.

Shipping and Handling Charges

Use the chart below to match your order subtotal with your shipping zone and method.

	Continental United States					
Order Subtotal	UPS Ground	2nd Day	Next Day	AK HI, PR	Canada	Foreign
$0.01 - $19.99	$3.00	$8.00	$17.00	$12.00	$5.00	$15.00
$20.00-$29.99	$5.00	$9.00	$18.00	$14.00	$7.00	$20.00
$30.00-$59.99	$6.00	$10.00	$20.00	$15.00	$9.00	$25.00
$60.00-$149.99	$8.00	$12.00	$23.00	$19.00	$12.00	$35.00
$150.00-$299.99	$10.00	$14.00	$27.00	$21.00	$20.00	$50.00
$300.00-$799.99	$15.00	$20.00	$34.00	$27.00	$25.00	$55.00
$800.00 +	$20.00	$25.00	$40.00	$32.00	$35.00	$60.00

UPS C.O.D. add $5.00 (U.S./PR only)

Creative Micro Designs, Inc.
P.O. Box 646
East Longmeadow, MA 01028
Info: (413) 525-0023
Fax: (413) 525-0147

Payment and Delivery: CMD accepts MC, Visa, Money Orders, COD and Personal Checks. Personal Checks are held for up to 3 weeks. Most items are stock, contact CMD for current delivery schedules. Returns for merchandise credit only within 30 days with prior authorizations. All prices and specifications are subject to change without notice.